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Security Council

Fifty-seventh year

Provisional

4630th meeting

Tuesday, 22 October 2002, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Belinga-Eboutou	(Cameroon)
Members:	Bulgaria	Mr. Tafrov
	China	Mr. Jiang Jiang
	Colombia	Mr. Valdivieso
	France	Mr. Mauriès
	Guinea	Mr. Traoré
	Ireland	Mr. Corr
	Mauritius	Mr. Jingree
	Mexico	Mr. Aguilar Zinser
	Norway	Mr. Strømmen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Konuzin
	Singapore	Mr. Mahbubani
	Syrian Arab Republic	Mr. Mekdad
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. MacKenzie
	United States of America	Mr. Williamson

Agenda

Strengthening cooperation between the United Nations system and the Central African region in the maintenance of peace and security

Letter dated 21 October 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Cameroon to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2002/1179).

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178.

02-65330 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Strengthening cooperation between the United Nations system and the Central African region in the maintenance of peace and security

Letter dated 21 October 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Cameroon to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2002/1179)

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Burundi, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Japan, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

On behalf of the Council, I extend a warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Rodolphe Adada, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Francophonie of the Congo.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Adada (Congo) took a seat at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the Council, I extend a warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Agba Otikpo Mezode, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Central African Republic.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Mezode (Central African Republic) took a seat at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the Council, I extend a warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Léonard She Okitundu, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. She Okitundu (Democratic Republic of the Congo) took a seat at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the Council, I extend a warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Santiago Nsobeya Efuman Nchama, Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Francophonie of Equatorial Guinea.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Nsobeya Efuman Nchama (Equatorial Guinea) took a seat at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the Council, I extend a warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Jean Ping, Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Francophonie of Gabon.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Ping (Gabon) took a seat at the side of the Council Chamber.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Nteturuye (Burundi), Mr. Laotegguelnodji (Chad), Ms. Løj (Denmark), Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) and Mr. Motomura (Japan) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Tuliameni Kalomoh, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

It is so decided.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Emmanuel Mbi, Country Director for South-Central Africa and the Great Lakes Region of the World Bank.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Emmanuel Mbi, Country Director for South-Central Africa and the Great Lakes Region of the World Bank, to take a seat at the Council table.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of

objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Ms. Julia Taft, Director for the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery of the United Nations Development Programme.

It is so decided.

I invite Ms. Julia Taft, Director of the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery of the United Nations Development Programme, to take a seat at the Council table.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to His Excellency Mr. Ivan Šimonović, President of the Economic and Social Council.

It is so decided.

I invite His Excellency Mr. Ivan Šimonović, President of the Economic and Social Council, to take a seat at the Council table.

I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 21 October 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Egypt to the United Nations, which reads as follows:

> "In my capacity as Chairman of the African Group for the month of October 2002, I have the honour to request an authorization for Ambassador Amadou Kébé, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, to intervene in the debate on 'Strengthening cooperation between the United Nations system and the Central African region in the maintenance of peace and security' in the public meeting of the Security Council to be held on 22 October 2002, in accordance with rule 39 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council."

That letter has been published as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/2002/1178.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Council agrees to extend an invitation to Mr. Amadou Kébé.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Amadou Kébé to take a seat at the side of the Council Chamber.

I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 21 October 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Cameroon to the United Nations, which reads as follows:

> "In accordance with General Assembly resolution 55/161, of 12 December 2000, I have the honour to request an authorization for Ambassador Nelson Cosme, Deputy Secretary-General of the Economic Community of Central African States, to participate in the public meeting of the Security Council to be held on Tuesday, 22 October 2002 on 'Strengthening cooperation between the United Nations system and the Central African region in the maintenance of peace and security', in accordance with rule 39 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council."

That letter will be published as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/2002/1181.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Council agrees to extend an invitation to Mr. Nelson Cosme.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Nelson Cosme to take a seat at the side of the Council Chamber.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them a letter dated 21 October 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Cameroon to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council, which has been published under the symbol S/2002/1179.

In the course of this meeting, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to give the floor first to representatives of non-member States. If I hear no objection, I shall consider that the Council agrees to that proposal.

It is so decided.

I now give the floor to Mr. Tuliameni Kalomoh, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

Mr. Kalomoh: On behalf of the Secretary-General, who is away from Headquarters, I am greatly honoured to convey to the members of the Council his best wishes for the success of this important meeting. I also wish to welcome to New York the Ministers for Foreign Affairs who have travelled from their capitals to participate in these deliberations on strengthening cooperation between the United Nations system and the Central African region in the maintenance of peace and security. I should also like to recognize the central and most commendable role played by your country, Cameroon, and by you personally, Mr. President, as President of the Security Council for the month of October in initiating this crucially important event.

Members of the Council have before them an information note prepared by the Secretariat on the occasion of this meeting. Member States are also aware of the report recently submitted to the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly on cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). Given that we are here today specifically to examine the issue of cooperation in the maintenance of peace and security in Central Africa, I should like to highlight the following specific points in that domain.

The United Nations has long been committed, and remains actively involved, in assisting Central African States to realize their goals to promote sustainable peace and development. To that end, the various departments, offices, bodies, programmes and agencies of the United Nations system are working closely with Central African States, both individually and jointly, as indicated in our information note.

The current political, social, economic, security and humanitarian situation in several countries in the subregion is a source of serious concern. Several of the 11 member States of the Economic Community of Central African States have been afflicted by armed conflicts, cross-border tensions and armed incursions resulting in the deaths of innocent people, the wanton destruction of infrastructure and millions of refugees, returnees and displaced persons. The dire consequences of those conflicts have seriously undermined Central Africa's efforts to ensure sustainable stability, peace and development for its peoples. Troubling violations of human rights have also been widely reported in the subregion, contributing to a climate of tension.

Critical cross-cutting issues, such as those relating to ethnic tension, the cross-border circulation of weapons, the movement of armed groups, bandits and refugees, the absence of national dialogue, disputes over citizenship and land and inadequate economic resources, are common to the region. These cross-cutting issues need to be addressed in earnest in the search for peace, security and development in both individual countries and the subregion as a whole. The high costs of these cross-border threats, including the rapid spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the persistence of other deadly diseases, represent additional destabilizing factors.

Intensive efforts have been made at the national, subregional, regional and international levels to help stabilize the situation in the Central African subregion and to lay the foundations for durable peace and stability. But a lot more needs to be done. The United Nations has responded in many ways to the peace and security challenges facing the subregion. In particular, it has sought to promote the development and enhancement of the subregion's capabilities for early warning and prevention, as well as peace consolidation over the long term.

The Secretary-General has also, from time to time, dispatched Special Envoys to the subregion, and the Security Council, in its wisdom, has authorized the development of peacekeeping and peace-building operations in various parts of the subregion in response to specific situations. For instance, the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), as part of its mandate authorized by the Security Council, is in the process of implementing a programme of disarmament, demobilization and repatriation of foreign armed groups, which affects not only the Democratic Republic of the Congo, but also Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda and the Sudan.

The success of our initiatives depends primarily on the political will of the countries of the subregion and the cooperation of the international community as a whole, which, in particular, must provide the necessary funds to support concrete projects. This is the case, for instance, with the programmes of demobilization and reintegration. Unless adequate resources are made available, ex-combatants are unlikely to be successfully reintegrated into their home communities.

The reintegration issue is especially relevant in the consolidating of peace agreements reached in the subregion. Successful reintegration packages require a comprehensive approach by the entire United Nations system, working hand in hand with the World Bank. This approach should address the security and human rights aspects, as well as the economic and developmental aspects, of reintegration into society.

The United Nations contribution to the peace and security concerns of the Central Africa subregion included the creation in May 1992 of the Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, which has as its mission the promotion of arms limitation, disarmament and confidence-building measures among States of the subregion.

Despite these various efforts, however, Central Africa continues to encounter tremendous pressure in the political, economic, social and security areas that perpetuates the political and military crises in the countries directly affected and beyond. Many of the crises and their consequences frequently affect or otherwise threaten to spill over into neighbouring countries.

As indicated in our information note, we believe that the restoration and consolidation of lasting peace in the countries of the Central Africa subregion remain the primary responsibility of the Governments and peoples concerned. The United Nations and the rest of the international community can only offer assistance. We therefore hope that today's meeting will offer the opportunity to Central African States to reaffirm their commitment to the peaceful solution of conflicts between and among them and to policies that promote inclusive and participatory governance based on democratic principles, respect for human rights and the rule of law.

At the same time, we call upon the international community to continue to support the efforts of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) countries so as to promote sustainable peace and development and curb the widespread proliferation of weapons and mercenaries in the subregion. In this connection, the Security Council's continued interest in and attention given to developments in the Central Africa subregion, which has contributed significantly to the creation of greater awareness of the need for immediate and effective action to stabilize the situation in Central Africa, is very essential.

It would be important that the international community undertake the economic stabilization of Central African countries that are emerging from conflicts and embarking on democratic reforms. As stressed in our note, we strongly believe that policies promoting human rights and the rule of law and the development of inclusive and responsive governance would facilitate the consolidation of peace and the stabilization of the countries of the subregion.

The Central Africa region is richly endowed with human and natural resources. A climate of sustainable peace backed by constructive national and regional policies and supportive international cooperation would help direct these resources to the improvement of conditions in the subregion. Important steps have been taken to that end but much remains to be done. I wish to reassure the participants gathered here today, that the United Nations will continue to work with the countries and the peoples of Central Africa to help them build a more peaceful and prosperous subregion.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs for his statement. I give the floor to Mr. Emmanuel Mbi, the Country Director for South Central Africa and the Great Lakes countries of the World Bank.

Mr. Mbi: It is an honour for the World Bank to participate in this public meeting of the Security Council on the important question of the strengthening of cooperation for peace and security in Central Africa.

Over the last couple of years, developments in Central Africa — Angola, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of the Congo and Rwanda — have created a window of opportunity for the return of peace and stability in the region. Events have accelerated over the last months with the signing of the two agreements of Luanda and Pretoria between the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda and Rwanda. Now, more than ever, effective coordination among all parties interested in supporting the consolidation of peace and stability in the region is of utmost importance.

In this context, I would like to make three broad remarks on the World Bank's engagement in Central Africa. My first broad point is an observation: in Central Africa, as well as in other regions, conflict and development are intrinsically linked.

The conflicts in Central Africa illustrate a finding of recent World Bank research: deep political and economic development failures are among the key root causes of conflict. Political exclusion and mismanagement of economic rents, combined with widespread poverty, have created explosive situations that are easily ignited by relatively minor incidents. Often, in Central Africa as elsewhere, the fundamental problem is a failure to develop political institutions to accommodate the diversity of society in a context of rapid demographic growth, large rural/urban migrations and extreme poverty. The conflicts in Central Africa also show how conflict has become a major development issue for Africa. The human suffering caused by conflict is immense.

But conflicts also wipe out decades of development efforts. In Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the gross domestic product per capita today is lower than it was in 1990, 12 years ago. Throughout Central Africa, physical damage is intensive and extensive; markets have become highly fragmented and inefficient, which has forced many communities to return to autarky; many institutions have collapsed; social services are no longer delivered; and HIV/AIDS is spreading.

Moreover, conflicts are taking a heavy toll on neighbouring countries' development efforts. Population movements and the inflow of refugees, border instability, disruptions of trade flows, all threaten the stability of neighbouring countries.

Conflicts tend to follow cyclical patterns, as we have seen in many Central African countries. Research shows that there is a probability of 0.5 that countries that have had a conflict will return to war within five years of a peace agreement. Unless peace dividends are rapidly provided, post-conflict Governments are often too weak to maintain political and social stability. In the uncertain and unstable period that characterizes most post-conflict situations, international efforts can tip the scale and effective post-conflict recovery can go a long way towards preventing further conflicts from erupting. This is a critical lesson for our work today in countries like the Central African Republic, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo or the Republic of Congo, to name a few. It is in this context that the World Bank has been called to play an increasing role in a number of Central African countries.

My second broad point is that the World Bank intervenes through a variety of complementary instruments and approaches. The Bank has devoted considerable attention to addressing post-conflict situations worldwide and in Africa. Currently, the Bank is engaged in 16 conflict-affected countries in Africa, with programmes focusing on economic stabilization, for example, in Congo-Brazzaville, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda; infrastructure reconstruction in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; support to private sector and agriculture in Rwanda; social services delivery in Burundi; HIV/AIDS prevention in the Central African Republic; demobilization and reintegration in Rwanda; and community-based rehabilitation in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda. Overall, the portfolio in all 16 conflict-affected countries now totals some 80 projects with a value of about $5 billion. The recent rules on our funding will soon make it possible to provide a relatively large part of our new support in the form of grants.

Let me make a brief comment on these programmes. What we have learned over the years is that, in post-conflict countries, priorities based on general experience may be misplaced and conventional wisdom may not work. Some reforms might be atypically important because the economy is atypically sensitive to them. Others that are usually critical for reducing poverty may be counterproductive. We are therefore paying particular attention to the political economy of recovery in post-conflict countries.

Let me also add that our lending programme is only part of our work. We are also providing substantial technical assistance and capacity-building support. Such support is often critical, as was demonstrated by the success of early policy advice in Rwanda after the 1994 genocide and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2001. We are also helping in designing consistent, comprehensive and implementable recovery programmes and in mobilizing donors to support it.

But these efforts are only one component of a broader effort undertaken by the international community to restore peace and stability. Consolidating peace requires intervening across a broad range of activities — political, military, economic and humanitarian. Economic assistance can make an important contribution to peace and stability, but it cannot ensure them. Aid can be only one element of a

broader, holistic strategy aimed at ensuring a comprehensive and coordinated treatment of all key dimensions of recovery. In this context, we are looking towards the United Nations system, and in particular the Security Council, to provide the type of leadership needed to create an environment in which we can make a contribution to a peace process in Central Africa.

I would like to underline that, even at a technical level, no single agency can hope to provide the needed support on its own. The Bank is therefore committed to working in partnership with others and in particular to developing a strong collaboration on the ground with the United Nations agencies, and in particular the United Nations Development Programme.

My third broad point is to call attention to a special programme that we have developed over the past year, which I believe complements the efforts made by the United Nations, and in particular by its peacekeeping forces. This is the Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Programme (MDRP) for the Greater Great Lakes Region of Africa.

It is very much the spirit of partnership that shapes the Greater Great Lakes Regional Strategy for Demobilization and Reintegration, which seeks to enhance the prospects for stabilization and recovery in the region. The Strategy was designed on the premises that no single donor or agency can address the complexity of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration issues in the region, and that the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants are necessary to establishing peace and restoring security, which are themselves preconditions for sustainable growth and poverty reduction. Governments of the region also recognize the regional dimension of these challenges and have expressed their support for a regional disarmament, demobilization and reintegration framework.

Extensive efforts by regional bodies and the international community are under way in the security, political and economic recovery spheres. The Regional Strategy for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration needs to be seen within the broader context of these efforts. It aims to complement national and regional peace initiatives by providing support for the social and economic reintegration of ex-combatants and cannot substitute for political solutions to the conflicts.

The Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Programme was then developed to operationalize the Strategy I just mentioned. The MDRP brings together, in a first instance, nine countries — Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Namibia, the Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Uganda and Zimbabwe — involved in or affected by the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as over 30 partners from regional organizations, donor countries, United Nations agencies and the international financial institutions, many of which I am pleased to see represented here today.

The Programme objectives are, first, to provide a comprehensive framework for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) efforts; secondly, to establish a consistent mechanism for donor coordination and resource mobilization; and thirdly, to serve as a platform for national consultative processes. The Programme will be implemented over a period of five years, from 2002 to 2006. Preliminary figures indicate that there is a potential for 350,000 ex-combatants to be demobilized and reintegrated under the MDRP. This figure includes both former members of national armies and members of irregular armed groups.

Countries in the greater Great Lakes region would qualify for support from the MDRP on the basis of several general and country-level eligibility criteria. Foremost among these are Government participation in the regional peace process and the adoption of key policy measures. In view of the importance of flexibility and timeliness of financing to exploit emerging opportunities, the country-level criteria focus on the establishment of appropriate institutional arrangements and the elaboration of a national programme in consultation with the international community.

Two committees have been established to facilitate the participation of national, regional and international stakeholders: one to address policy issues under the Programme, and one to address for financing issues. In addition, a regional technical coordination group consisting of national programme managers was created to assist in harmonizing individual DDR efforts. Continued dialogue among stakeholder focal points ensures regular cooperation at the technical level.

The specific contributions of partners — that is, donors, United Nations agencies, and local and international non-governmental organizations — to the DDR process would be based on their respective comparative advantages and may differ from country to country. The World Bank's role in implementing the strategy and Programme is three-fold: first, as manager of the MDRP secretariat; secondly, as administrator of the Multi-Donor Trust Fund; and thirdly, as co-financier of national programmes.

The MDRP was launched in April 2002. To date, it has supported the preparation of demobilization and reintegration programmes for Rwanda and Angola, the first meeting of Technical Coordination Group in Luanda in August 2002, a technical workshop between the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and of Rwanda in relation to the implementation of the Pretoria Agreement in September, and a joint mission during which four teams visited Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda from 23 September to 4 October 2002.

Today offers yet another opportunity to reiterate the critical need to ensure that our individual and collective efforts in support of peace and security in Central Africa not be devised separately and in abstraction, but that they complement each other and further the regional approach we have all endorsed.

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to Ms. Julia Taft, Director of the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery of the United Nations Development Programme.

Ms. Taft: It gives me great pleasure to be able to present some highlights of the role of the United Nations Development Programme as it helps to maintain peace and security in the Central Africa subregion.

It is well known that impoverishment can be a cause and a consequence of conflict. Unstable situations thwart development efforts. But lack of development can also be a contributory factor to instability. As the speaker from the World Bank underscored, there is a consensus that the two are interdependent.

This interdependence between poverty and conflict determines the UNDP entry point to conflict prevention and peace-building. The interdependence further means that development programmes must contribute to the political purpose of consolidating peace and preventing future conflicts, as well as serve their normal purpose of improving conditions of life and relieving hardships. Hence, new and effective strategies, tools, and partnerships with new partners such as the World Bank, the other funds and programmes of the United Nations system, and international and national civil service organizations are all becoming part of a sustained effort to meet these challenges.

In 2001 the United Nations Development Programme Executive Board endorsed this broad relationship and the connection between the role of UNDP in development and peace-building, and supported our strategy of response as well.

While conflict is by no means limited to Africa, that continent has experienced an especially large number of conflicts and complex emergencies. The Central Africa subregion has been one of the areas most affected by ongoing or recurrent conflict. The extent and the impact of these conflicts on development underscore our urgent need to assist the Governments whose normal development operations have been overwhelmed by the implications of conflict.

The parameters of the strategic framework for the United Nations Development Programme are conflict prevention, recovery, peace-building, and capacity-building of regional and subregional organizations. Conflict prevention efforts focus on capacity-building of national institutions and actors to do better conflict analysis and to identify risk factors and a range of appropriate responses.

Recovery interventions focus on developing strategies to bridge the relief-to-development gap, with emphasis on the reintegration of ex-combatants and civilians displaced by war, as well as on community-based rehabilitation and reconstruction. Recovery also supports the rebuilding of governance and socio-economic institutions to promote political and social inclusion, the rule of law and effective and fair administration of justice to prevent relapse into conflict. In the area of peace-building, UNDP has been heavily involved in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, removing small arms from communities, rebuilding social capital and launching reconciliation processes.

Let me highlight one regional example to illustrate the range of activities we are engaged in. As part of its global mandate to address the consequences of the availability and use of illicit small arms, UNDP has undertaken a range of activities in the Great Lakes region to assist States and communities where the transition from armed conflict to economic recovery is currently impeded by continuing insecurity and violence.

The United Nations Development Programme will be launching a cross-border project in November 2002 that aims at reducing armed violence through community recovery activities, voluntary disarmament, strengthening capacities of the Republic of the Congo and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and facilitating the repatriation of Democratic Republic of the Congo ex-combatants and refugees. In addition, UNDP, in close collaboration with INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization, is currently developing a multi-country programme to improve the capacities of States in the region to control the illicit proliferation of small arms. In addition to an assessment of zones of high-risk trafficking in illicit small arms and the development of a training programme for border and customs officials, the project aims to contribute to the development of regional security frameworks within the Great Lakes region.

The United Nations Development Programme also provides support to the Nairobi secretariat in implementing the Nairobi Declaration on Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons as part of its effort to implement regional inter-governmental initiatives to address small arms.

At the country level, UNDP carries out a number of programmes that are worth mentioning briefly. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, within the framework of the Peace Accords, programmes to kick-start economic recovery in war-affected regions and to reintegrate the Congolese ex-combatants are critical to breaking the link between insecurity and chronic underdevelopment. In that context, UNDP has been asked by the Government and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to take a lead in DDR in collaboration with the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), the World Bank and other partners. In addition, UNDP will provide technical expertise and training to Government officials in how to secure weapons collection, management and destruction procedures to assist in the development of needed registration and identification systems and to undertake assessments to identify optimal disarmament strategies and weapons availability and distribution patterns. UNDP is also currently collaborating with MONUC and civil society organizations in promoting increased awareness and sensitization on small arms among local communities.

Through its Reintegration of Ex-combatants and Collection of Weapons Project in the Republic of the Congo, started in June 2000, UNDP has reintegrated approximately 8,000 ex-combatants in return for the voluntary surrender of more than 12,000 small arms and explosives, all of which have been destroyed.

In Rwanda, UNDP has supported over the past four years the Rwanda Demobilization and Reintegration Programme for over 16,000 troops. A national summit on unity and reconciliation is planned for the end of October 2002, with the support of UNDP. We are also seeking to address the problem of the resettlement of the internally displaced population of over 170,000. A policy research institute on national and regional peace and conflict prevention issues, the Centre for Conflict Management, affiliated with the National University of Rwanda, was established by and continues to be supported by UNDP.

In Burundi, in addition to the ongoing internally displaced persons and returning reintegration programme, UNDP will support the Government in the formulation of a programme to address the reinsertion and the reintegration of ex-combatants.

In Angola, we are also concerned about and involved in the ex-combatant issue. Following the peace agreement between the Government and UNITA, we formulated a private regional recovery programme to enhance municipal governments to help them provide services for returnees. Our initial proposal is to begin in two provinces, and as soon as the Government of Angola approves our project, we will initiate a major effort to mitigate the effects of war in those provinces. In the Central African Republic, in 2001, the Government requested UNDP and the United Nations to reorient the objectives and the strategies of their national programme of disarmament and reinsertion. During the initial implementation period of the project, thousands of items of ammunition and small arms were collected and publicly destroyed in a "flamme de la paix". UNDP has also provided direct training of

national officers on basic procedures in handling weapons and explosives safely. In Chad, we are also engaged in the reintegration of ex-combatants, as well as mine-clearance activities.

Finally, I would like to say that some of our efforts in Cameroon have really been to support a very important role the Government has played in the creation of mechanisms to preserve peace and security in the subregion. The joint Central African Republic-Cameroon Commission has been actively encouraged and assisted by the United Nations country team in dealing with the circulation of arms and human trafficking. Thus, Cameroon has an important role in the context of the six-monthly ministerial meetings of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa.

Additionally, the areas of support to the Government from UNDP include advocacy, the preparation of programmes to halt the proliferation of small arms, capacity-building through the United Nations Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa, as well as technical support to the National Human Rights Institution of Cameroon.

Let me just say that those highlights are only a few of the concrete measures that UNDP is undertaking. We obviously need to do more, and we look forward to integrating and expanding our efforts in collaboration with others. UNDP remains committed to ensuring priority support for those programmes that contribute to peace and security throughout the Central African subregion now and in the years to come.

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Simonovic, President of the Economic and Social Council.

Mr. Simonovic: United Nations Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold, who gave his life in an effort for peace in the Central African region, is said to have remarked that the Organization was not established to get us to heaven, but save us from hell. Today's open debate in the Security Council, 41 years since his death, finds us working together to help bring peace and a brighter future in a region that has known too much misery.

We are increasingly aware that peace-building requires a comprehensive approach that encompasses a wide range of political, developmental, humanitarian and human rights programmes and mechanisms. Actions are needed that focus on fostering sustainable institutions and processes in many areas. That has been emphasized in the outcome of a number of Security Council debates. Moreover, the President of the General Assembly last week underlined the fact that peace and security are closely linked to issues of poverty and that reducing poverty is the single most important and challenging of the Millennium Development Goals.

As a central intergovernmental body in the economic and social field for coordination in the United Nations system, as well as for undertaking studies and making recommendations to other entities, the Economic and Social Council has mandated functions that can help in examinations and actions dealing with root causes of violence and with humanitarian assistance, economic and social reconstruction and development and human rights processes that are at the heart of peace-building.

The Central African region is confronted with a myriad of cross-cutting challenges arising out of a number of conflicts that have ravaged the subregion. As many members have noted, several of the 11 countries in the region have been affected by civil conflicts, including Angola, Burundi, the Central Africa Republic, Chad, the Republic of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, which have resulted in major loss of life and large-scale destruction of economic and social infrastructure and have created millions of refugees, returnees and displaced persons. Not surprisingly, of the 11 countries, all those experiencing conflicts, with one exception, are in the low development category of the United Nations Development Programme 2002 Human Development Report.

The Economic and Social Council recognizes the importance of cross-border influences and linkages in a number of conflicts in Africa and, in its ministerial communiqué of 2001 on supporting the sustainable development of Africa, it called for the exploration of the feasibility of creating a subregional United Nations coordinating capability, possibly by using existing United Nations regional offices, which would assist the United Nations system in setting integrated policies and strategies, ensure the harmonization of activities and lend support to national and subregional peace-building efforts and initiatives, while supporting subregional integration. The Council will continue to advocate for the creation of such capability.

The Council believes that it is imperative for the countries of the subregion to own and lead their own reconstruction. The Central African region has enormous potential, with a population of 100 million, and vast untapped natural resources. The Council deplores the illegal exploitation of those resources, especially because the sustainable development of those resources can serve to alleviate the humanitarian, economic and social consequences of conflict and put those countries on the path to long-term growth. We will add our voice to that of the Security Council in calling for an end to that practice.

The Economic and Social Council welcomes the recent positive developments in the region: the withdrawal of troops from the Democratic Republic of the Congo; the signature of the ceasefire agreement between the Burundi Transitional Government and two rebel movements, on the occasion of the Dar es-Salaam regional summit of 7 October; and the decision to deploy an international observation force to the Central African Republic to promote calm, particularly on the country's border with Chad. We believe that these are positive signs that the subregion is emerging from the nightmare of civil conflict and that they will serve to create a conducive environment for rebuilding economies and relaunching economic growth.

You, Sir, addressed the Economic and Social Council in your capacity as President of the Security Council when that body recently commemorated the tenth anniversary of the signing of the General Peace Agreement for Mozambique, and a number of those who are here in this Chamber were also present at that meeting. On 4 October 1992, after 16 years of civil conflict, the parties to that agreement undertook to do everything in their power to achieve genuine national reconciliation. In the decade that has elapsed since then, Mozambique has been an African and a United Nations success story, as well as an example of how peace and development interlink. We need such success stories elsewhere in Africa as well.

This past July the Economic and Social Council adopted a resolution that we hope will lead to very useful and positive steps by the international community in support of African countries emerging from conflict. This is the agreement to establish, upon request, an ad hoc advisory group, at the ambassadorial level, to examine the humanitarian and economic needs of the country concerned; to review relevant programmes of support; to prepare recommendations for a long-term programme of support that integrates relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and development in a comprehensive approach; and to provide advice on ensuring the adequacy and coherence of international assistance.

Guinea-Bissau is the first country to request that such an advisory group be formed. We are now working out the details of arrangements, and I hope that we will be able to establish the ad hoc advisory group on Guinea-Bissau this Friday, 25 October. The advisory group will have inter-agency support in the conduct of its work, and we look forward to the analysis and report that the Economic and Social Council should receive by mid-January. In performing its task, the Economic and Social Council Group will closely cooperate with the Security Council's Ad Hoc Working Group on Africa.

Let me conclude by saying that at the recent commemoration of 10 years of a successful peace agreement, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mozambique affirmed that post-conflict recovery and peace-building are even harder to manage than peacekeeping and peace negotiations, as pressures are high for the delivery of quick and sustained results and for continuous proof that peace is more profitable than war. This is a sobering thought, and we should keep it in mind when discussing the prospects for Central Africa.

Let me thank you once again, Sir, for organizing this debate and for inviting the Economic and Social Council to participate.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker inscribed on my list is Mr. Rodolphe Adada, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Francophonie of the Republic of the Congo and current Chairman of the Economic Community of Central African States. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Adada (Congo) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the 11 member countries of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) — Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Rwanda and Sao Tome and Principe — which my country is currently chairing, I should like first of all to convey my heartfelt congratulations to you, Sir, for the dynamism with which you have been guiding the work

of the Council during this month. It is with justifiable pride and great determination that the subregion whence you hail is participating in this debate, to which you were kind enough to invite the international community today.

May I also, on behalf of all my colleagues, commend the efforts that the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, has been deploying towards peace and sustainable development in Africa as a whole. We are particularly grateful to him for the attention and interest that he has consistently accorded to questions of peace and security in our subregion.

We are therefore quite optimistic as to the outcome of today's very timely debate, as very favourable prospects are currently emerging in Central Africa.

Less than two months ago, from 26 to 30 August 2002, the eighteenth ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa was held at Bangui, in the Central African Republic. The Committee, an instrument for preventive diplomacy, has just celebrated its tenth anniversary.

Let me welcome here the existence of this valuable forum for coordination, which has enabled our States, in spite of the disputes that have sometimes divided them, to maintain an ongoing dialogue with a view to easing tensions. Thanks to this Committee, the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX) was established, though it has not yet become truly operational.

The Bangui meeting noted that there was a generally positive trend in the geopolitical and security situation in the subregion. This is due in particular to the goodwill of the parties to the conflict and to various mediation efforts, both subregional and international, and especially to a genuine awareness on the part of the majority of actors involved. In Angola, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic, to name just a few, real progress has been made which must be consolidated. Hence the importance of this meeting, which should help us develop our peace-building capacities through specific actions in the areas of disarmament, demobilization and the social and vocational reintegration of the former combatants.

Peacemaking efforts in Central Africa are a priority today, since they are essential for peace, political stability and, ultimately, the economic recovery and development of post-conflict countries. We all are well aware that demobilization and reintegration processes, if poorly carried out or incomplete, inevitably lead to continuing violence and insecurity, as, for some former combatants, the use of weapons represents an automatic solution for their daily subsistence.

Therefore, directly following the cessation of hostilities, national programmes must be crafted that would allow us to rebuild the confidence of an entire segment of the population which needs to be reintegrated into civilian life. But this requires resources that are not always available to countries that have been bled dry by the trials of war — hence the need for assistance from the international community.

To illustrate what I have just outlined, I should like to recall my country's experience after the end of the civil war, following the agreement on the cessation of hostilities and the peace accords signed in 1999.

A programme was set up jointly with the United Nations Development Programme whose results were encouraging but limited: 8,009 ex-militia members received assistance with reintegration, within the framework of a process aimed at reaching 10,000 former combatants; 11,114 weapons and pieces of ammunition were collected, and a "Flame of Peace" weapons-burning ceremony was held to destroy them; and almost 1.8 billion CFA francs were earmarked for some 2,609 micro-projects.

The process is ongoing, because there are still about 25,000 former militia members who wish to benefit from those programmes. Steps have already been taken in this regard with the United Nations and other partners. The World Bank has agreed to provide $5 million in funding.

Similar problems have arisen and will continue to arise throughout the subregion, and it is important for the United Nations to consider them urgently and pragmatically. That is especially true in the case of Angola, for which, on 15 August 2002, the Security Council established a Mission — a timely and appropriate response, since it is designed to, inter alia, provide humanitarian assistance to vulnerable groups, ensure the social and vocational reintegration of

demobilized soldiers, promote economic recovery, prepare for elections and lead the demining effort.

We hope, therefore, that that Mission and other initiatives undertaken by the international community will constitute an adequate response to the appeal made in Bangui by the Advisory Committee on Central Africa Security Questions for peace-building activities in Angola, such as the demobilization and reintegration of former combatants and the promotion of reconstruction and economic recovery in the country.

We would like to make a similar appeal with regard to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where, as we have already emphasized, for the first time in years, there is a glimmer of hope that peace will return, particularly as a consequence of the withdrawal of foreign troops and the negotiations for an inclusive dialogue.

Now is an appropriate time to request the strengthening of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) in terms of personnel and to ensure its effective deployment so as to prevent any reversals. Now is also the time for an important reintegration component to be incorporated into the mandate of peacekeeping operations and for a substantial budget to be allocated for such missions.

Also with regard to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we called on the international community as a matter of urgency to respond generously to the global appeal for the Democratic Republic of the Congo for 2002, which was launched on 27 November 2001 by the United Nations and its partners for humanitarian action.

An urgent appeal was also directed at the international community, in particular at the bilateral and multilateral donors for Burundi, in support of peace and improved living conditions in that country, as a follow-up to the commitments entered into at Paris and Geneva during the donor conferences on Burundi.

We also call on the United Nations and the bilateral partners to implement an essential component of the Libreville communiqué of 2 October 2002, issued at the conclusion of the summit meeting on the situation between Chad and the Central African Republic: the deployment of an inter-African observer force on the border between those two countries, which have decided to normalize their relations. I have no doubt that the United Nations will view that initiative, which we are undertaking on behalf of the subregion, with great interest.

We would like in particular to focus the Council's attention on the difficult problem of the weapons that are circulating in our subregion. In this regard, with a view to assessing the scope of the problem and seeking an appropriate response, a subregional conference was convened in Ndjamena, Chad, two years ago, where recommendations were adopted that we are working to implement.

In that context, next year we plan to organize a workshop on the implementation by the countries of Central Africa of the Programme of Action adopted at the conclusion of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We are seeking the help of the United Nations in organizing that workshop and in establishing a subregional policy on disarmament and the monitoring of the traffic in weapons.

For all of those reasons, we support the initiative of the President of the World Bank to give specific consideration to the problems of the economic recovery and development of post-conflict African countries — an initiative launched recently at Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania, during a meeting of the economic ministers of those countries.

As Council members may have noted, the problems of Central Africa require urgent measures to be taken with a view to consolidating the process of restoring peace as well as of establishing sustainable peace through substantial accompanying efforts on the part of the countries concerned. As we said earlier, we need the Council to join with us in our determination to escape once and for all the cycle of war and to help us to enhance our local capacity for peace-building.

There is an urgent need for such an effort, but it must also be a lasting one; the paths already exist, but they must be cleared sufficiently, dug more deeply and reinforced.

We have our own subregional structure for cooperation — the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) — which our heads of State decided to reactivate and which recently carried out missions in support of peace and security. That must be encouraged and helped.

The Advisory Committee has also demonstrated its usefulness and effectiveness, and we call for it to be maintained and for further financial assistance to be provided to help it.

We have also expressed our desire for the holding of a conference to bring together all the countries neighbouring the Democratic Republic of the Congo so as to establish a legal and political framework to ensure peace and security in our subregion.

Finally, an international conference on the Great Lakes region — an idea that is often discussed — needs to be convened with a view to guaranteeing peace, stability and development in this part of the continent, which has for too long been subjected to violence and division.

On behalf of ECCAS, I appeal for the support of the international community, represented by the Security Council, for the implementation of all specific initiatives to build peace and stability in a region that is called upon to play a major role on the international stage because of its enormous potential.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and La Francophonie of the Congo for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is His Excellency Mr. Agba Otikpo Mezode, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Central African Republic. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Mezode (Central African Republic) (*spoke in French*): I would like first of all to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. You have been demonstrating great leadership in the exercise of your functions. I would also like to congratulate your predecessor.

I also want to welcome your excellent initiative to convene this public meeting of the Security Council on the subject of cooperation between the United Nations system and the Central African region in the maintenance of international peace and security. I am particularly pleased because my country has benefited, and continues to benefit, from the support of the United Nations system.

The Central African Republic has, indeed, experienced many crises, in the settlement of which the Security Council has been involved. The first of these stemmed from recurring political and military mutinies by a portion of the army in 1996 and 1997; the second from two coup attempts. The first of these was a military ethnic attack that took place in May 2001 and had tragic consequences; the second took place in November 2001, and it almost led to a conflict involving the entire subregion.

With regard to the crises in 1996 and 1997, I will simply say that the support of the international community was decisive, first through the Inter-African Mission for the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements, and then through the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA), whose positive actions are being continued in an outstanding manner by the United Nations Peace-building Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA).

The Council will recall that MINURCA worked effectively in the peacekeeping process and in the successful organization of the legislative and presidential elections of 1998 and 1999. Following the positive developments brought about by MINURCA and continued by BONUCA, the then head of Government decided to come to New York on a working visit on 15 and 16 May 2000, when a special meeting was organized at the initiative of the Secretary-General.

In his speech, the head of Government made the following observations. First, the work of national reconstruction remained fragile and limited in its effects due to two recurring factors: lack of security, related to a particularly unstable subregional environment; and the spread of poverty, the result of an economy unable to generate sustainable growth because its foundations had been decayed by the scourges of corruption, poor administration and diseases such as HIV/AIDS. Secondly, the country's security situation was the most disabling handicap to the process of peace and democracy, as well as poverty eradication, because of the profound military-political crisis.

A presentation was submitted requesting support under two headings: support for the restructuring of the defence and security forces and support for the financing of our autonomous development, including

the reintegration of military personnel to be demobilized and of young and adult arms traffickers, as well as support for the host communities. But today we must also look to the recruitment of young Central Africans, who must be educated in a republican spirit. At that time, the amount required was calculated to be approximately $47 million over a period of four years in the first area and $8 million in the second area. That amount would have to be increased today. That presentation convinced the Security Council, which made an appeal for support of the Government's plan of action in the area of peace, security and stability and for relaunching the economy of the Central African Republic, the only solution for generating sustainable resources to meet the cost of sovereignty and to ensure social peace. I have reiterated this here and in the General Assembly on many occasions.

The coup d'état of 28 May 2001 was unanimously and harshly condemned by States and international organizations. We acknowledge that. But on the ground, it was necessary to save the institutions of the Republic. In accordance with the Constitution, the President of the Republic, our head of State, launched an appeal. One country, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, spontaneously responded, sending equipment to the loyalist troops so that they could resist and repulse the attackers. They also sent a contingent to protect the President, who in the opinion of all observers was undeniably elected by universal suffrage. That action was welcomed by all.

With respect to the coup d'état of November 2001 and its consequences, summit meetings were held by various regional and subregional organizations. The Community of Sahelo-Saharan States (CEN-SAD) met on 3 December 2001 and decided to create a force to maintain peace and security in Central Africa, following consultations between the United Nations and the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). On 4 and 5 December 2001, the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) took note of the conclusions of the Khartoum Summit. On 16 January 2002, the Brazzaville Summit decided to create an ad hoc commission on the Chad-Central African crisis. The eighth ministerial-level ordinary session of the Central Organ of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution met at Tripoli on 26 January 2002 and urged the Security Council to consider the possibility of urgently deploying a peacekeeping force to consolidate peace and security in the Central African Republic. Finally, on 2 October 2002, there was the Summit of CEMAC heads of State and delegation on the Chad-Central African crisis. That Summit's communiqué was the subject of a statement (S/PRST/2002/28) by the Security Council at its 4627th meeting, held on 18 October 2002. We are happy to note that the Council welcomed the final communiqué. You should know, Mr. President, that I bear a message for you in that connection.

I would like to note that the outcomes of all those special and regular meetings affirmed the need for the creation of a mechanism for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts and the need to make it operational. But it is often difficult to make such mechanisms operational because they lack the required resources.

My second observation concerns the existence of those mechanisms within the various regional, subregional or continental organizations, such as the African Union, CEN-SAD and the Economic Community of Central African States. Some of those mechanisms have sometimes been criticized for a certain inertia, which is due to the fact that the relevant documents have not been ratified. As for the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX), the National Assembly of the Central African Republic will be discussing it during its present session. However, I would like to add that those mechanisms must work in concert to be more effective, because the task is immense.

With respect to the international economic and financial organizations, as well as the international community at large, I would like to recall that the Central African Republic is a post-conflict State. There was very real destruction to social and economic infrastructure and loss of human life following the mutinies and the recurring coups d'état. Observers who have visited the Central African Republic since 1997 can bear witness to that. The various post-conflict Governments of the Central African Republic have always expressed their firm resolve to emerge from conflict, but the fact that we are a post-conflict country is not always taken into account when the situation in our country is assessed. However, the Security Council constantly calls for the international community and international development institutions and organizations to focus attention on the Central African Republic. We are grateful for what has already been

done. But it is possible to do a little more, it being understood that in the medium and long term it is the Central Africans alone, in partnership, who will bring about the development of their own country.

The task of socio-economic reconstruction today needs a stable and peaceful environment so that the fight against poverty can produce results through the dynamic of lasting sustainable development. Peace, democracy and stability must be founded on a peaceful social situation. To claim otherwise would be unrealistic. The Central African Republic does not for the moment have the resources to alleviate the social situation: the payment of salaries, pensions, grants and so on. Those observations recurrently appear in the reports of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic. It would be a grave risk not to integrate those observations into the framework of strengthening of cooperation between the United Nations system and Central Africa in the maintenance of peace and security.

The United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa met in Bangui last August. Today we are pleased to hold the presidency of this Committee and will continue to do so until the next meeting, which will again be held in Bangui. We hope that positive results will be achieved through the recommendations and resolutions of the past meeting. Participants understood the efforts made by my country to contribute to preserving peace in the subregion. I hope that in six months their meeting will help them to gauge the progress achieved.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Central African Republic for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is His Excellency Mr. Jean Ping, Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Francophonie of Gabon. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Ping (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to associate myself with the statement that was made by His Excellency Mr. Rodolphe Adada, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Congo, on behalf of the member countries of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). I also wish to commend the excellent initiative taken by Cameroon, a Central African country, in convening, under that country's presidency, a meeting of the Security Council devoted to the strengthening of cooperation between the United Nations system and Central Africa in the maintenance of peace and security. This initiative bears witness to the Security Council's commitment to seeking solutions to the different conflicts that thwart peace, stability and development in the subregion.

This meeting is a fresh opportunity to examine the progress that we have made together in the maintenance of peace and security and to reach agreement on ways of strengthening our cooperation at a time when we see glimmers of light in the Central African subregion, which has been clouded for many years now by the persistence of many crises and armed conflicts.

Central Africa is evolving at the pace of a two-fold destiny. First of all, the destiny of abundance, characterized by a sort of divine providence that has bestowed upon our immense subregion vast natural resources — diamonds, leather, manganese, oil, and rich forests — necessary not only for its own development but also for that of the rest of the world. Thus, the Congo basin, characterized by rich and abundant biodiversity, is a major asset to the development of the countries of the subregion and also an ecological preserve for the world — a real set of lungs for the planet.

This fortunate side of life contrasts with an ever-present aspect — that of numerous crises, armed conflicts and scourges, such as tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS, as well as steadily rising poverty. It goes without saying that, in such a context, the assets of the subregion can be seriously jeopardized if nothing is done to support the efforts our States are making to find proper answers to the many ills they are confronting.

If present conflicts were to persist, they could also have grave negative effects — first of all, on other bordering regions; then, on the entire African continent; and, lastly, on the rest of the world. Therefore, it is urgent that the international community, represented by the United Nations, focus all of its action on the subregion in order to help restore peace and security. This is why it is necessary to consolidate cooperation between the United Nations system and the States of our subregion. This particular cooperation has developed since the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 46/37 B on 6 December 1991,

which created the Standing Advisory Committee on Questions of Peace and Security in Central Africa. In fact, with the assistance of this Committee, we have established several mechanisms in the ECCAS for the prevention, management and settlement of conflicts, mechanisms that deserve the support of the international community. Among the most important of these, we have the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX), the Central African Multinational Force, the Defence and Security Commission and the Central African Early Warning System. In addition, and along the same framework of the aforementioned Committee, we have adopted many recommendations and decisions that are aimed at promoting and strengthening peace in Central Africa. Together we have undertaken multifaceted actions in areas as varied as respect for and strengthening of human rights, of democracy, the rule of law, the development of legal and collective security instruments, the strengthening of subregional cooperation in the field of security through the organization of several joint military exercises, manoeuvres and patrols in our different States. All of these initiatives clearly show that the Standing Advisory Committee is the priority framework for our shared action in the field of peace, security and the development of the subregion.

Since this Committee stems from the United Nations, we believe that its budget should not be left to the sole responsibility of the States of the region, which are already confronting heavy debt and enormous economic and financial difficulties. In these conditions, would it not be wise to place the financing of this Committee's programmes within the regular United Nations budget? This would enable the Advisory Committee to have consistent material and financial resources, and thus to become the pivotal instrument for more effective and more concrete cooperation between the United Nations and the Central African States. It could thus be not only a framework for reflection and for development of proposals, but also, and above all, a means of action and of coordination of our shared initiatives in the field of the maintenance of peace and security.

Over recent years, the international community has observed the mediation efforts made by the Central African countries themselves, in cooperation with other African countries, in order to alleviate tension in the subregion, particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in the Republic of the Congo, in Angola, Rwanda, Burundi, Chad and the Central African Republic. Above and beyond these mediation efforts, we have also speeded up the process of subregional economic and social integration by developing trans-border cooperation, with the implementation of shared development programmes as the foundation. This integration policy has led to the creation of two concentric international organizations pertaining to the subregion — namely, the Economic Community of Central African States and the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC).

Under the leadership of its President, Gabon has been at the very heart of these diplomatic efforts. As everyone knows, His Excellency El Hadj Omar Bongo, has conducted many peace negotiations in the subregion. At present he is working side by side with Vice President Zuma of South Africa for the consolidation of the national reconciliation process that is under way in Burundi. It is also at his initiative that the CEMAC heads of State just met on 2 October 2002 in Libreville in order to examine the prevailing situation between the Central African Republic and Chad.

It was decided on that occasion to send a contingent of 300 to 350 troops from Gabon, Cameroon, the Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Mali. That contingent will be charged principally with monitoring the border between the two countries and making it secure. An important meeting of the military authorities of the countries concerned is now being held at the Gabonese military headquarters in Libreville. But we are expecting a swift response to the requests for logistical assistance that we have addressed to the international community as a whole.

President Bongo's efforts have been joined by those of other African heads of State, inspired by the will to establish an atmosphere of confidence and to strengthen the spirit of dialogue, cooperation, fraternity and solidarity that characterizes our identity. The establishment in the Central African Republic in January 1997 of the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements, and in March 1998 of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic, whose forces were under the command of a Gabonese general, illustrate the new willingness of our subregion's leaders to settle disputes by peaceful means.

Along the same lines, we welcome the positive evolution of the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, thanks in large part to the signing of the Luanda and Pretoria Agreements, which made possible the withdrawal of foreign troops. The same applies to the situation in Angola, marked by the end of the longest war in Africa and by the signing, in April 2002, of a Memorandum of Understanding addendum to the Lusaka Protocol between Government forces and those of UNITA.

We should like to note, however, that the efforts being made by our States will remain dead letters if they do not receive from the international community — and more particularly from the United Nations — substantial material, human and financial support. That is why it is more necessary than ever that the United Nations strengthen the peacekeeping capacity of our States. In order to do that, strategies should be developed that emphasize training, the organization of joint peacekeeping exercises and, above all, the creation of partnerships between donors and troop-contributing countries.

In the process of post-conflict peace-building, there is an aspect that we wish to stress: the financing of the reconstruction of countries destabilized by conflicts. The international financial institutions — the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank — have a decisive role to play. They must soften and adapt their conditionalities for countries, such as the Central African Republic, that are involved in a process of national reconstruction and reconciliation, giving priority to structural adjustment and financing programmes that are in accord with the objectives of peace.

We welcome the presence here of Mr. Mbi, representative of the World Bank. His participation in this debate shows that problems related to international peace and security affect development. There can be no development without peace.

Thus, in addition to financing the reconstruction of countries emerging from conflict, we must together find comprehensive responses to questions of security in Central Africa. To that end, it is important to lay the economic and social foundations of lasting peace in the entire subregion: the peace dividends to which Mr. Mbi referred earlier.

I should like to add that, in the case of a country such as the Central African Republic, it is somewhat hypocritical to demand, before concluding a programme with that country, that it resolve its debts — something of which it is incapable. The efforts of the international community, and more particularly of donors, must offer to the Central African countries the means they need in order to eradicate poverty and to ensure sustainable development for all. Peace is possible in Central Africa. The political will to achieve it exists.

Beyond the tragedy unfolding in the Central African subregion, the signs of hope and of reassurance are many. Our leaders and our peoples have sensed the wind of peace blowing through Africa. They have only one message — the peace and development of a continent — as the launching of the New Partnership for Africa's Development attests. Progress towards the realization of those two objectives — peace and development — must be propelled jointly by the States of Central Africa and by the United Nations system.

Therefore, let us make our cooperation dynamic by taking concrete decisions together, by joining our efforts and, above all, by coordinating our actions for lasting peace in Africa in general and in the Central African region in particular. Only thus will the international community enable Africa to rise to the many challenges that it confronts today.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Francophonie of Gabon for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is His Excellency Mr. Léonard She Okitundu, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. She Okitundu (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I should like to thank you, Mr. President, for having placed on the Council's agenda a sensitive and crucial item: peace and security in Central Africa. Through you, I thank the entire Council for the interest that they have always shown in the evolution of the geopolitical and security situation in the subregion, which has been rocked by conflicts for decades. Moreover, one need only consult the Council's agenda to see that, on a regular basis, questions concerning Central Africa and the Great Lakes — Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to

name but a few — remain at the centre of the Council's ongoing concerns.

The potential for conflict in our region is illustrated, inter alia, by the following facts. First of all, seven of the 11 countries in the region are prey to disastrous and ruinous conflicts. Five of the 12 United Nations peacekeeping, peace-building or peacemaking missions on the continent are located there. Six of the 20 Special or Personal Representatives and Envoys of the Secretary-General in Africa are in Central Africa.

My delegation fully subscribes to the statement made earlier by my colleague from the Republic of the Congo, who expressed with eloquence and clarity the major concerns of our subregion.

My statement will address problems related to peace in Central Africa, mechanisms for cooperation between the United Nations system and the States of the Central African region in maintaining peace and security, and the real scope and current prospects of the problems.

Concerning problems related to peace in Central Africa, I note that, for too long, the Central African region has been shaken by violent conflicts that cause unprecedented human suffering and that hinder the region's development. The international community, through the United Nations, is doing its utmost to help the countries of the region to relieve the suffering of populations and to find and implement negotiated solutions for that situation.

In a large part of Central Africa — to which some of the States present here today belong — the United Nations has shown its willingness to associate itself with wide-ranging action with a view to tackling comprehensively the root causes of problems, of conflicts and of instability and to promoting peace and sustainable development in the region, inter alia by recommending the convening of an urgent international conference on peace, security, democracy and development in the Great Lakes region.

The conflicts in our region are largely due to the accumulation over many years of such complex and interrelated problems as bad governance, the lack of democracy, individual or ethnic monopolies over political power, entrenched political exclusion, endemic corruption, nepotism, violations of basic human rights and ever-increasing poverty. Such extremely negative factors account for the recurring cycle of political and ethnic violence and the almost permanent state of instability in the region. They also explain the fact that, despite its enormous mineral, water and agricultural resources, our region has been slow to begin its economic and social development and economic integration. Various elements are also adding a regional dimension to the effects of those conflicts, both due to tension among States and to the repercussions of that tension beyond the national borders of the countries concerned.

The consequences of this situation are well known and extremely serious and worrisome. They include a serious social crisis; the devaluing of human life as a result of decades of brutal oppression of populations, massacres and other even more despicable violations of human rights; deterioration and ageing of infrastructure and production facilities; the ravaging and criminalization of economies and the emergence of significant shadow economies; a decline in qualifications and the displacement of the workforce; negative impacts on cooperation and regional development; a long-term humanitarian crisis; and a precarious and explosive overall atmosphere.

In order to establish mechanisms of cooperation among the States of the region that might serve to end this grave situation, the countries of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) decided to ask for the help of the United Nations under the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly. Their proposal, whose primary objective is to establish peace and progress in the region, calls for a set of activities to promote trust, security and development in the framework of ECCAS. The following are some of the activities already envisaged by our States.

Our members seek to create an atmosphere of peace and constructive cooperation among themselves that is characterized by stable and predictable relations based on mutual trust among the States of the region. They also seek to promote adherence to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations by focusing on peace, the peaceful settlement of disputes, human progress and human rights, as well as to establish lasting peace and solidarity among the States and peoples of Central Africa.

Given that request and the overall responsibility of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security, a meeting was held in Lomé, Togo, from 15 to 17 February 1998 on the

subject of promoting confidence, security and development through the CEEAC framework. The conference identified measures to increase trust and security and to promote development within the Economic Community of Central African States. Those measures included establishing a legal framework for a system of subregional collective defence that includes a common armed force; creating a centre for strategic military studies; holding joint military exercises and patrols; setting up a standing crisis committee for the prevention of conflict and the peaceful settlement of disputes; encouraging periodic meetings between ministers for foreign affairs and/or defence; and strengthening diplomatic cooperation by opening new embassies and consulates, establishing hotlines between the region's heads of State and concluding border treaties. The Lomé conference also recognized that greater cooperation among the States of the subregion in the areas of security and defence would help bolster confidence and speed up the process of socio-economic development in member countries, in line with the constitutive treaty of the Economic Community of Central African States.

We are grateful to the entire United Nations system for helping us in this effort, in particular by establishing the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa in May 2002. The purpose of that Committee is to promote peace, security and development in Central Africa through confidence-building measures, arms limitations and disarmament. The Committee's programme of action calls for a set of measures to be taken in the areas of preventive diplomacy, peace-building, peacemaking, peacekeeping, compliance and monitoring.

Among the most important decisions taken by States members of CEEAC under the auspices of the Standing Advisory Committee are the non-aggression pact adopted in Libreville, Gabon, in September 1993 and signed in Yaoundé, Cameroon, on 8 July 1996; the establishment of the Central African Early Warning System; the establishment of the Central African Multinational Force; the setting up of the Central African Defence and Security Commission; the establishment, on 25 February 1999, at Yaoundé, Cameroon, of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa, following the signing of the relevant protocol at Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, on 25 June 2000; the establishment of a subregional centre for human rights and democracy in Central Africa; and the establishment of a subregional parliament in Central Africa.

My delegation would also like to express its full satisfaction with the tremendous amount of work done by the secretariat of the Advisory Committee, which has been responsible for the holding of 18 ministerial meetings and numerous conferences and workshops. Every one of those meetings, seminars and conferences adopted very diversified recommendations and measures in the priority areas identified by the member States of CEEAC under the auspices of the Committee. Those measures and recommendations pertain to, inter alia, the promotion and respect for human rights, including minority rights; the establishment of viable socio-economic conditions; promoting transparency in democratic governance; strengthening economic integration; increasing cross-border cooperation, including in the area of transportation; bolstering military and security cooperation, including by organizing joint patrols and joint training exercises to promote participatory democracy; and the peaceful resolution of disputes. The entire set of measures and recommendations would take too long to recite here.

With regard to the scope of these efforts, as the Council might be aware, although in recent years cooperation between the United Nations and CEEAC through the Advisory Committee has resulted in the adoption of numerous relevant and practical decisions aimed at promoting and strengthening peace in the region, only some of those recommendations and decisions have been implemented, while the majority have yet to be put into effect. Moreover, most, if not all, of the bodies established in this cooperative framework have not yet begun to function.

Moreover, while some States enjoy a security situation that could be called stable, most of them continue to face serious social and economic problems, as well as domestic and/or international conflicts. Those countries are either in an open state of war, still in the process of negotiating and making peace, or have just completed electoral processes after years of troubles whose consequences they still feel. A number of persistent problems continue to beset the entire region, including those associated with common monitoring of borders where there are cross-border conflicts; disarming armed groups; trafficking in small arms and light weapons; large-scale transnational banditry; implementing lasting solutions to the problem

of refugees in accordance with the relevant international conventions; and, finally and obviously, serious problems pertaining to economic and social development, poverty and the promotion and enjoyment of human rights.

The least we can say is that existing mechanisms for cooperation have generally not made it possible to achieve real physical, economic and political integration. That has been due mostly to the persistence of conflict, insufficient human and institutional capacity — especially with regard to integration — and the very slow pace of implementing the political commitments made at the highest levels in this regard. With regard to prospects and based on what I have said, it would appear that the challenges are still there. The strategies to be adopted must be multifaceted and take into account all dimensions, internal and external, if we want them to be lasting solutions that would restore peace, security and development to us.

Yet, for the first time in a long while, prospects for a return to peace are emerging in most of the States concerned. The Security Council is being asked particularly to take all necessary measures to encourage, accompany, speed up and consolidate positive developments and make the incipient peace process irreversible.

Along these lines, the agreements and peace protocols signed by different warring groups in the region should be seen as provisional arrangements which, in order to be lasting, must necessarily be supported by various confidence-building measures, either between States or within States. At the regional level, the United Nations system should help all of the Central African States in promoting and implementing goals deriving from the Charters of the United Nations and the African Union, in particular by taking measures which will help strengthen harmony, peace, security, democracy and respect for human rights and economic development, supported by transparency in administration, governance, combating corruption and regional cooperation.

The United Nations system can also help the States of the region to implement the decisions and recommendations adopted by the Economic Community of Central African States, in the framework of regional cooperation, as well as those on the settlement of conflicts, peace-building, humanitarian assistance to refugees and displaced persons, and all other relevant measures adopted in the framework of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa.

We believe that priority should be given to the following: establishing an effective response system for the conflicts that are tearing Central Africa apart, namely establishing an early-warning mechanism for Central Africa (MARAC) and a Central African multinational peacekeeping force (FORMAC); partnership with the United Nations system in training for peacekeeping operations and the formation of military units trained for the job; partnership with the women's organizations for peace and security in Central Africa, given the recognized role of women in the processes aimed at restoring a lasting peace; humanitarian assistance for refugees and displaced persons, especially as regards their integration and reintegration, and the rehabilitation of their homes; material and financial support to implement the Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (DDRR) programmes.

My delegation would like, in that connection, to welcome and thank the World Bank for its positive initiative in proposing a programme of demobilization and reintegration that operates in several African countries, including some that are not part of Central Africa. Here, I would like to join my colleagues in welcoming the presence of Mr. Mbi of the World Bank.

Generally, increased involvement of the United Nations is required and must be encouraged in all its human, institutional and financial dimensions. This is why my delegation appreciates and supports the initiatives aimed at holding an international conference on peace, security and development in the Great Lakes, which will help to find a solution to end the cycle of violence and enable the development of the region.

At the national level, after five years of foreign occupation that were preceded by several years of chaotic administration, and bearing in mind current developments, including the signing of peace agreements between the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda, new prospects of peace with Burundi, and the preparations for an inclusive national dialogue, my delegation, on behalf of President Kabila, calls the attention of the Security Council to the need for critical support on the part of the United Nations so that my country can consolidate the peace process by recovering its territorial integrity,

strengthening national reconciliation and putting into place new democratic institutions.

My delegation also calls the Council's attention to the urgent need for post-conflict assistance so that we can restore the country's economy, infrastructure and ecosystem and strengthen its institutional and human capacities. In the short term, it is urgent and crucial to strengthen the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) after the aggressor forces start withdrawing and support efforts to hold a successful and inclusive dialogue culminating in national reconciliation through free and transparent elections.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for his kind words addressed to me and other members of the Council.

The next speaker on my list is Mr. Santiago Nsobeya Efuman, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Francophonie of Equatorial Guinea. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Nsobeya Efuman (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): May I first of all congratulate you, Mr. President, on your presiding over this meeting of the Security Council, and for being a worthy son and representative of the Republic of Cameroon, a neighbouring country with which Equatorial Guinea has a fine relationship of good neighbourliness and friendship. Your presence on the Security Council does honour to Equatorial Guinea and, of course, to the entire Central African subregion.

In addition, I associate myself with the statement made by Minister Rodolphe Adada, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Congo, in his capacity as the current president of the Economic Community of Central African States. This being said, I want to associate Equatorial Guinea with the words of appreciation and well-deserved congratulations addressed to you on your presiding over the work of the Security Council during this month. We also extend our appreciation to each of the members of the Security Council.

Our gratitude goes in particular to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, and through him to each and every one of the bodies of the United Nations system, that directly or indirectly make an invaluable contribution to the attainment of the objective of this meeting of the Security Council.

Together with the preceding speakers, Equatorial Guinea highly values this fine and unprecedented initiative of devoting a meeting of the Security Council to a thorough consideration of the study of the difficult issue related to the increasingly urgent need to strengthen cooperation between the United Nations and the subregion of Central Africa in the maintenance of peace and security.

Consequently, I would stress that, for the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, whose Government is making every effort for the maintenance of peace and stability in our country, this meeting reaffirms and clearly attests to the great responsibility and primary role that the United Nations Charter assigns to the Security Council as the body in charge of ensuring and preserving international peace and security wherever they may be threatened. This meeting is focused on and recalls that task and concerns over the alarming situation in the Central African subregion, which is suffering from the proliferation and persistence of crisis and conflict situations and hotbeds of tension that, declared and not, undoubtedly represent a genuine collective threat to peace and a serious obstacle to the enormous and tireless efforts of the States of the subregion to confront the challenges facing our countries in the achievement of political, economic and social development for our respective peoples.

More significant yet is the fact that this meeting of the Security Council is taking place at a particularly complex time in the international situation, characterized by the threats to the peace and hotbeds of tension in the Central African subregion to which I have just referred and which are known to all. I will not name all the fraternal Central African countries that are stricken with crises, because there is no pleasure in constantly seeing these names on a list of crisis victims. We hope that the names of those Central African countries in crisis and conflict will soon be moved to the list of those enjoying peace, stability and progress for their peoples after so many years of suffering.

Central Africa, endowed with immense and significant natural resources and a population of over 100 million inhabitants, cannot remain indefinitely immersed in instability. That is why Equatorial Guinea,

without dwelling on each and every one of the elements of the untenable situation prevailing in Central Africa — whose political, economic and social implications have already been described to the Council — wishes to express its appreciation for the important work done over the past 10 years by the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly.

Out of its sense of responsibility and conviction, Equatorial Guinea has been fully involved in this dynamic in order to make its modest contribution to the search for and consolidation of peace and stability in Central Africa. In this context, Equatorial Guinea welcomed the convening in the city of Bata, from 18 to 21 May 1998, of the Subregional Conference on Democratic Institutions and Peace in Central Africa, where the subregional parliament of Central Africa was created at the initiative of President Obiang Nguema Mbasago. That institution is responsible for involving peoples in addressing questions of interest with a view to strengthening mutual confidence and to promoting peace and harmony among the States of subregion. It was also established as a primary mechanism for cooperation and dialogue in the promotion of democratic values in the Central African subregion.

Among the activities of the Standing Advisory Committee, Equatorial Guinea also welcomed the convening of several important ministerial meetings, as well as of a high-level seminar on the implementation of the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, held in Yaoundé from 19 to 21 July 1999. The seminar was devoted to the promotion of participatory democracy, the peaceful settlement of disputes, good-neighbourliness, the struggle against the illicit trafficking and proliferation of small arms and light weapons, cooperation in the field of defence and security, the promotion of international humanitarian law, the establishment of a mechanism for the maintenance and restoration of peace, the promotion of good governance, sustainable development and the strengthening of subregional cooperation. Equatorial Guinea also welcomed the convening of the Subregional Conference on the Proliferation and Illicit Circulation of Small Arms in Central Africa, held in N'Djamena from 25 to 27 October 1999.

Fully aware of the challenges confronting Central Africa, and ever since the summit of the heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), held in Libreville, Gabonese Republic, my country, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, has spared no effort over the past three years in making its modest contribution to the process of relaunching ECCAS in order to create mechanisms within the Community in the framework of the collective effort of all members countries in the maintenance of peace and security.

Those efforts include the signing of a non-aggression pact among the States of ECCAS and the establishment of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa; the Multinational Force for Central Africa; the early-warning mechanism for Central Africa; and a subregional centre for human rights and democracy in Central Africa.

To make these mechanisms operational, ECCAS has turned to the United Nations to establish the foundations of cooperation that is more consistent with current and future challenges. ECCAS obtained observer status in the United Nations two years ago and has established an important framework of cooperation that gives new impetus to improved cooperation at the subregional level and with the United Nations system. At the same time, ECCAS has been building bridges of cooperation with the European Union and the entire international community.

In this regard, Equatorial Guinea reiterates its desire to see such cooperation flourish, especially since we see encouraging prospects on the horizon for the peaceful settlement of the conflicts and hotbeds of tension now being experienced by a number of States of Central Africa.

Certain that democracy is not an event, but rather a process, Equatorial Guinea is fully convinced that peace, security and stability are prerequisites to the restoration and consolidation of democracies, to a strengthened culture and promotion of respect for human dignity, and to the achievement of the progress and prosperity to which the peoples of our respective countries are entitled.

The Government of Equatorial Guinea is also fully convinced that peace, dialogue and tolerance are essential elements in promoting coexistence and harmony among peoples and nations. That is the basis of Equatorial Guinea's unflagging resolve to make the

Central African subregion a zone of peace, stability and cooperation. With that in mind, we insist, as we always have and always will, on recourse to dialogue and peaceful negotiation.

In conclusion, I solemnly reaffirm before this important meeting of the Security Council the determination of the Government of Equatorial Guinea to make further progress in consolidating the rule of law, democracy and the promotion and protection of human rights. I wish to inform the Council that, on 12 October, on the occasion of the thirty-fourth anniversary of our national independence, President Obiang Nguema Mbasago of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea offered a presidential pardon and reprieve to the majority of those who had been found guilty and deprived of their freedom by our country's justice system for various crimes and offences. This act of magnanimity attests to his policy in favour of the social reintegration of all the children of Equatorial Guinea, based on the conviction of the President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea that such measures contribute concretely to the maintenance of peace and stability in our country.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Francophonie of Equatorial Guinea for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Denmark. I invite her to take a seat at the Council table and to make her statement.

Ms. Løj (Denmark): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The countries of Central and Eastern Europe associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia — and the Associated Countries Cyprus, Malta and Turkey align themselves with this statement.

Allow me to congratulate the presidency of the Council on convening this open session in the Security Council on the strengthening of cooperation between the United Nations system and Central Africa in the maintenance of peace and security. I would also like to thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the opportunity to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The European Union supports the view that there is a need for a closer look at the opportunities for strengthening regional integration and cooperation in the Central African region. Regional integration and cooperation would contribute to the integration of the Central African countries into the world economy and play a decisive role in consolidating peace and preventing conflict. This would enable the countries involved to face cross-border challenges, in particular in the field of the environment and the use and management of natural resources.

The subregional organizations in the Central African region could be important building blocks for regional political and economic integration, and they could contribute in securing peace and prosperity. But an important prerequisite for consolidating regional peace, democracy and economic stability is the existence of a genuine political will among the Central African States to cooperate. In this regard the EU is happy to note that there is evidence of an increasing feeling of collective responsibility for securing peace and stability in the Central African region.

At the regional level the recent establishment of the African Union and the adoption of the New Partnership for Africa's Development are positive steps towards building Africa's capacity to prevent and manage all aspects of conflicts through the strengthening of existing regional and subregional initiatives. If this growing sense of regional responsibility and ownership continues to grow and is expressed in a genuine political will for cooperation, then other countries and the United Nations should help to enhance the institutional capacities of the region and cooperate closely with them. The European Union is fully committed to working closely and at all levels with the United Nations and the region.

In the Cotonou Agreement, the European Union has established long-term contractual partnerships with the countries in the Central African region. One of the priority areas of the Agreement is that of supporting regional integration and cooperation. Among other things, we have entered into negotiations for regional economic partnership agreements. These will strengthen the relations between the European Union and the Central African States in full conformity with World Trade Organization rules and will foster regional integration.

Apart from the Cotonou Agreement, it should also be noted that the European Union has launched or contributed to a number of other initiatives in the area

of conflict prevention and management in Africa. Furthermore, the EU member countries have contributed to peacekeeping in Africa both financially and through participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations.

Let me just add that the European Union follows the developments in the Great Lakes region closely and is studying the possibility of organizing an international conference on peace, security, democracy and development in the region.

Allow me to conclude by reaffirming the commitment of the European Union to help strengthen the regional capacities in Central Africa in order to secure peace, democracy and economic stability. The EU is ready to cooperate fully in this endeavour with the United Nations system and Central Africa.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker on my list is the representative of Egypt. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like at the outset to extend to the Council President our sincere thanks for organizing and presiding over this important meeting. We also wish to express our appreciation for the high-level participation that characterizes this debate, which reflects the enormity of the challenges we are facing as an international community in the Central African region. It also shows our common aspiration to assist this critical region and enhance cooperation between it and the United Nations system.

We cannot discuss means of enhancing cooperation between the international community and the Central African region, with all that it embodies in terms of potential, capabilities and resources, without pausing at the major hot points of conflict afflicting it and agreeing on means to resolve them. From this standpoint, the Egyptian delegation would like to mention a number of specific points that we feel must be emphasized when addressing the ongoing armed conflicts in the region.

First of all, the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is the primary one, for its shadows loom over any attempts to establish peace in the Great Lakes region in particular and the Central African region in general. Thus, we feel that the efforts being made by the international community, and specifically the efforts of the United Nations system, should be focused on finding a comprehensive and lasting solution to that conflict in a manner that will pave the way for addressing all the other problems facing the region in terms of security, economic, humanitarian and developmental dimensions.

Secondly, and accordingly, we invite the Security Council to quickly expand the military component of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC) to 8,700 personnel, as recommended in the latest report of the Secretary-General. We hope that the United Nations, in close cooperation with the troop-contributing countries, will be able to deploy the additional units in the eastern parts of that country as soon as possible, in order to create an environment conducive for launching the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme for the elements of the armed groups that are not parties to the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement.

Thirdly, we invite the international community to throw its political weight behind the recent agreements signed between the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, and between that same Government and Uganda, in Pretoria and Luanda respectively, in a manner that will guarantee full and coordinated implementation of their provisions. We hope that the current negotiations between the Congolese Government and other parties will lead to an imminent breakthrough that establishes the broad foundations under which the brotherly Congolese people can enjoy the security, peace and prosperity towards which they aspire.

Fourthly, we must at the same time address the other hot points of conflict which continue to the north of the Democratic Republic of the Congo into the Central African Republic and to the east into Burundi. We thus invite the United Nations to continue its support for the region and efforts aimed at concluding a ceasefire agreement between the Government of Burundi and the rebel Front for the Defence of Democracy (FDD) and National Liberation Forces (FNL) groups that remain outside the Arusha peace process.

We hope that the international community will consider supporting the decisions of the regional initiative, should the rebel groups continue their intransigence and their refusal to work with the

Transitional Government that came into power in November of last year.

On the other hand, we invite the United Nations to continue its support for the peace-building efforts in the Central African Republic through the United Nations Peace-Building Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA) in Bangui. We hope that the Security Council will be forthcoming in supporting the initiatives of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) and the Community of Sahelo-Saharan States (CEN-SAD) in that regard.

If the international community is indeed serious in its efforts to support the peace frameworks in the three countries to which I have referred, to nurture them and to achieve the desired results, then it will have taken the first step towards establishing a strong cooperative relationship between the international community and the entire Central African region. The establishment and maintenance of that partnership will undoubtedly require each side to display the necessary political will and to assume the accompanying obligations, each within the limits of its capabilities and in accordance with its responsibilities under the Charter.

In that context, the following points should be taken into consideration. First, there are many existing regional frameworks for cooperation in Central Africa aimed generally at establishing the foundations of peace, security and stability within and among its States. We feel that the United Nations can exert more efforts to support those frameworks and that the Security Council should strive to establish an institutional relationship with them. In that context, we wish to mention particularly the Protocol establishing the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa, which includes a non-aggression pact and a mutual assistance pact. That is an initiative that deserves commendation and requires political support from the Security Council and technical support from the Secretariat and other United Nations specialized agencies, in order to implement it.

Secondly, the illegal flow of small arms and light weapons in the Central African region is a major contributing factor to the emergence and fuelling of armed conflicts in the region. Thus, the United Nations is called on to pay greater attention to the scourge and to put into effect comprehensive programmes that address the problem in its regional dimension. In that context, we welcome the mission undertaken by the United Nations Development Programme in the Great Lakes region last March to assess the scope, nature and impact of the flow and the use of small arms in the region. We also call on the international community to contribute towards the implementation of the strategy put forward for that purpose at the regional and national levels in the States concerned. We also support the proposal previously submitted by the Secretary-General to give the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa a more prominent role in encouraging transparency and confidence-building among the States of the region with regard to military expenditures.

Thirdly, since they took the initiative to establish the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution in Africa in 1993, Africa's leaders previously accepted the limits to the capabilities available to them in order to undertake peacekeeping operations in the continent. Such limitation, of course, also applies to the Central African region. That is why we are calling on the Security Council to assume responsibility when necessary and when the region lacks the necessary military, logistical and financial capabilities to implement them. We also call on the Council to give its political weight to the limited peacekeeping operations that the regional organizations are able to undertake, such as the one undertaken by CEN-SAD in the Central African Republic and the one to be undertaken by CEMAC in Bangui.

We also feel that the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations can play an effective role in collaborating with the subregional organizations and within the context of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, in order to contribute to training and readying military units of the Central African States in the area of peacekeeping operations and to coordinating the assistance that donor countries may provide in preparing and equipping such forces.

Fourthly, and lastly, we must affirm that confronting the root causes that make the Central African region vulnerable to armed conflict and security upheavals will require the allocation of large amounts of financial assistance for many years to come. If the international community is serious about translating the results of this meeting into tangible reality on the ground, its assistance will lead to

consolidating the foundations of peace, stability and development in the region. That is why we believe that the major test of the international community's determination in this area will be provision of financial and developmental incentives that will encourage implementation of the results of the upcoming international conference on security, peace and stability in the Great Lakes region, in order to provide its States with an example of success that can be applied elsewhere in the African continent.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Japan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Motomura (Japan): Thank you, Mr. President, for convening this public meeting of the Security Council on this very important subject. The situation in Central Africa, where many States are suffering the consequences of long years of conflict, is an issue that continues to demand the Council's urgent attention.

In addressing the root causes of conflict, my Government has consistently advocated the importance of Africa's own initiatives and self-help efforts or ownership, as well as the partnership between Africa and the international community that supports such African efforts. But because those efforts cannot bear fruit unless there is peace and stability, it is imperative that all parties concerned turn away from conflict and devote their energies to nation-building and development. Towards that end, initiatives at the subregional level are indispensable.

From this point of view, we attach great importance to subregional organizations such as the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX), which, in close cooperation with the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, may play an essential role in the prevention and resolution of conflicts. One very positive example of such efforts at the subregional level is the communiqué recently adopted at the CEMAC Summit regarding the border issue between the Central African Republic and Chad.

It is incumbent upon the international community, including the entire United Nations system, to support the initiatives of those organizations. The recommendation on strengthening the relationship between the Council and African regional and subregional organizations, put forward by the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Security Council on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa, chaired by Ambassador Koonjul, should be the starting point.

At the same time, the Japanese Government would like to encourage all countries in Central Africa to continue to fully cooperate with the United Nations offices and organs located in the subregion, such as the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), the United Nations Mission in Angola (UNMA), the United Nations Office in Burundi (UNOB) and the United Nations Peace-Building Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA), as well as the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region. Their cooperation is essential in consolidating the recent, still fragile, progress that has been made in the peace process in such countries as Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

There will be no stability and prosperity in the world in the twenty-first century unless the problems of Africa are resolved. In the recognition that these problems pose tremendous challenges not only to the region itself but also to the international community as a whole, my Government has designated the period leading up to the Third Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD III), to be held next October, as the "Year for Soaring Cooperation with Africa." It is our sincere hope that other Member States will join in making this aspiration a reality.

The President (*spoke in French*): I propose that, with the consent of Council members, the meeting be suspended until 3 p.m.

The meeting was suspended at 1.05 p.m.